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SUBJECT: NORWAY SEEKS CLOSE COOPERATION WITH U.S. ON HRC MARCH SESSION

REF: 10 STATE 16231

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¶1. (C) On February 25, Poloff met with Vebjorn Heines, Coordinator of Human Rights Council (HRC) issues at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Heines said Norway sees eye-to-eye with the United States on virtually every one of our priorities, with the exception of Goldstone. Norway leads the WEOG (Western powers) group in the HRC, so wants to work closely with the U.S. on shaping outcomes.

"DEFAMATION," GUINEA, IRAN, BURMA, DPRK

¶2. (C) On the issue of religious and racial intolerance, Heines said that Norway very much appreciates our alternative proposal for a resolution, and will support it both strategically and technically within the HRC. He asked for our continued close cooperation in Geneva on this. On Guinea and Iran, he said that responding to these human rights crises are crucial for the credibility of the HRC. On Iran specifically, Norway would support a special session of the HRC. Norway will, as it has historically, support the Burma and DPRK resolutions, although Heines noted that Norway is more engaged in the Burma issue. Voice of Burma's studios are in Oslo, and the Norwegian ambassador in Bangkok frequently travels to Rangoon. Norway has given the drafters of the EU resolution on Burma input already.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC) ISSUE

¶3. (C) Heines emphasized that with the DRC, the western countries must proceed carefully to coordinate with the government in Kinshasa. "We must remember that this is an item 10 mandate, not an item 4 mandate, that we're pursuing," said Heines (item 4 of the HRC agenda involves serious human rights violations and involves monitoring without the agreement of the country concerned; item 10 concerns technical cooperation and involves both monitoring and capacity building, and is always in cooperation with the country at issue). Heines pointed to the experience with Sudan as a model-a cooperative approach that mobilizes Latin American countries and some Asian countries.

GOLDSTONE

¶4. (C) Heines thought that the Goldstone resolution in the UN General Assembly, as it is relatively benign, would calm the

situation in the HRC. While an additional resolution in the HRC was unavoidable, there could be a strong argument that the UNGA and HRC resolutions should harmonize, and therefore this would actually be a better situation in the HRC than otherwise would have been expected. Heines, when asked, said that Norway's position was that the U.S. position on Goldstone was as "overly sweeping" as we alleged Goldstone's conclusions were.

NORWEGIAN OBJECTIVES

15. (C) Norwegian objectives at the March HRC session are: (1) a new resolution on protecting human rights defenders which will be based on the report of the Special Rapporteur and will be tightly focused on specific measures to be implemented by countries; (2) country mandates for Burma, the DRC, DPRK, Iran, and Somalia (although Heines doubted a mandate renewal would come up on Somalia during this session, Norway is interested in the report that will be presented); (3) the report on secret detentions, which Heines characterized as "good, and important" ; (4) thematic mandates on torture and detentions, and resolutions on these issues; (5) resolution(s) on the rights of the child; and (6) the Norwegian Universal Periodic Report (UPR) on itself. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Gry Larsen will be present at the HRC on March 2.
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